

Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites

COMPREHENSIVE INTERPRETIVE PLAN

Prepared for

Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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*“ The only limit to
our realization of
tomorrow will be our
doubts of today.
Let us, therefore, move
forward with a strong
and active faith. ”*

FDR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites (ROVA) comprise the Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Top Cottage, Eleanor Roosevelt's Val-Kill, and Vanderbilt Mansion. The National Park contains over two dozen structures of historic, cultural, and aesthetic significance, and covers 776 acres including historic trails, gardens, woods, farmlands, viewsheds, and Hudson River frontage.

Located adjacent to the park, and integral to the visitor experience, are the National Archive's FDR Library and Museum and the Henry A. Wallace Visitor and Education Center. The Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites are also important resources and key attractions of the community of Hyde Park and the Hudson River Valley.

The mission of the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites is as follows: "The National Park Service preserves the cultural and natural resources of the Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, and the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Sites and provides for their public appreciation and enjoyment."

The Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites are facing critical challenges and important opportunities. Changing demographics, limited budgets and staffing, and physical conditions must be addressed. The opening of the new Visitor Center in Fall 2003, plans for a regional Transportation Center, and new partnerships and collaborations offer tremendous interpretive opportunities for the park.

INTERPRETIVE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Comprehensive Interpretive Plan (CIP) addresses five main interpretive goals of the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites:

1. Meet major current challenges.

New and expanded interpretive strategies will help the park address the key issues that require immediate attention including declining visitation; the challenges, opportunities, and adjustments resulting from the opening of the Henry A. Wallace Visitor and Education Center; and decreasing budgets for staff hires.

2. Build and serve new audiences.

Audience demographics are changing dramatically. The park's current primary audience is aging, and it is imperative to attract and engage new generations lacking direct experience with Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt and the events of their eras.

3. Create a unified interpretive strategy.

To make the visitor experience enjoyable as well as educational, the park must increase the number and diversity of interpretive methods. Compelling themes will relate the interpretive experience to visitors' lives, tie the component sites together, and link the visitor experience inside the historic structures to the grounds and to the Hudson River Valley landscape.

4. Strengthen programmatic partnerships.

It is essential to coordinate efforts of CIP partners and external stakeholders to coordinate planning for current and future educational, interpretive, and marketing efforts.

5. Address logistical challenges.

The size and scope of the sites present a number of challenges to the interpretive experience of the visitor. Pre-visit planning, ticketing, and coordination of visits to the ROVA sites and the FDR Library and Museum are key to the success of the overall visitor experience.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are organized into Short-Term Recommendations (1 - 2 years) and Mid- and Long-Term Recommendations (3 - 10 years).

Summary of Short-Term Recommendations

1. Meet Current Challenges

The following recommendations are proposed for immediate consideration and implementation to meet the pressing challenges identified by park leadership.

Reverse dramatically declining visitation through audience-driven programming in collaboration with CIP partners and through new marketing, promotion, and partnership initiatives. Program ideas include family-friendly events, recreational opportunities, seasonal programs, and regularly scheduled events to attract local residents and build repeat visitation. New marketing efforts include public service announcements, targeted promotions to special interest groups, list exchanges, cooperative promotions, and on-line mailings to ROVA visitors, both on-site and on the Web.

Respond to the challenges, opportunities, and adjustments resulting from the opening of the Wallace Center by utilizing the Center to focus visitor attention on the “Roosevelt Experience” as the major interpretive theme for this season. Promote the full tour package, reinforcing the concept that Springwood, Top Cottage, and Val-Kill are really one story, connected by the evocative landscape shaped by FDR. Use the shuttle bus, running at regular intervals, to connect all sites. Create a “Fala Trail” starting at the Wallace Center to lead visitors from the Center to the ROVA sites. Increase collaboration with the FDR Library and Museum and the National Archives for public activities and educational programs in the new Visitor Center. Use civic engagement as a major focus of new programs. Turn the Wallace Center food service into an interpretive opportunity, offering box lunches to encourage picnics at Val-Kill and Top Cottage and creating menus, using local Hudson River produce, based on foods the Roosevelts ate and served to their guests.

Develop strategies to build Top Cottage visibility and visitation starting with a public relations effort and major events promoting new opening hours and celebrating the addition of furnishings and artifacts, the Val-Kill–Top Cottage Trail, and special Ranger-led programs. Promote Top Cottage as a recreation, trail, and picnic destination, targeting hikers and other recreation groups. Use the shuttle bus for visitor transportation to Top Cottage from the Wallace Center and other ROVA sites. Focus on the intimacy of Ranger-facilitated discussions at Top Cottage and the opportunity to “get close to FDR” by handling period objects, books, and furnishing. Develop self-led interpretation at Top Cottage including interpretive signage on the veranda, peek-in windows, printed guides, and audio tours.

Work within declining budgets for staff hires by creating more self-guided tours [printed guides, audio tours, and personal digital assistant (PDA) tours]. Partner with colleges and other institutions and organizations to recruit seasonal interns and volunteers.

2. Build and serve new audiences

In addition to the recommendations listed under Current Challenges, the park should continually work to better understand the demographics of ROVA audiences, and continue to develop and promote interpretive programs and products that truly respond to visitors' needs and interests.

3. Create a unified interpretive strategy

Use overarching interpretive themes to help visitors make connections among their experiences at the individual sites of the park and to their own lives. Restructure tours to move visitors through the entire site and grounds. Develop orientation center exhibits at Val-Kill Playhouse and the Vanderbilt Pavilion. Create changing displays that interpret work-in-progress and behind-the-scenes activities. Better incorporate under-utilized resources in the park.

4. Strengthen programmatic partnerships

Increase programs co-sponsored by CIP partners and external stakeholders. Use programmatic partnerships to enhance staff development. Establish a process for ongoing input and interchange between scholars and staff, particularly in dealing with new information and difficult questions. Develop system for summarizing and disseminating new information to staff.

5. Address logistical challenges

Implement park-wide staff reorganization to better serve target audience segments: general public, education programs, special events. Develop a facilities improvement plan to support interpretive goals. Prioritize interpretive initiatives to prepare for the General Management Plan.

Summary of Mid- and Long-Term Recommendations

1. Integrate the new Transportation Center into the ROVA interpretive program and Wallace Center experience. Develop transportation system including jitneys and interpretive trails within the park and eventually linked to key tourist transportation hubs.
2. Emphasize landscape and garden interpretation through thematic tours, special programs, additional Waysides, interpretive signage on trails and transportation routes, and restoration of grounds and viewsheds.
3. Offer new interpretive methods to get the messages across, including *Exhibits, Signage, Printed Materials, Media, Tours, Programs, and Special Events*.
4. Create "1st stop" orientation center exhibits at Springwood Carriage House (TIC) to tell the stories of the Roosevelt family and the functioning of the estate.

AUDIENCE

Interpretation at the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites is audience driven and is designed to fulfill specific audience objectives and to respond to the needs and interests of a variety of key audience segments. These specific audience segments were identified during the interpretive planning process and include the general public, students and teachers, professionals, local and regional residents, and special interest groups.

The Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites are now seeking to

- Attract and serve younger audiences
- Continue to serve current visitors
- Expand repeat visitor base
- Build upon local and regional tourism

In 2002 the annual visitation to the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites (ROVA) was 215,123; with 100,558 visitors to the Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt Historic Site (including the FDR Library and Museum); 28,996 to Val-Kill, and 85,569 to the Vanderbilt Mansion.

Preliminary Report of Interviews at Historic Sites in the Hudson River Valley, Summer and Fall, 2002, conducted by Marist College, indicated several interesting characteristics of current visitors to the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites compared to overall visitors to the region's historic sites. The average age of ROVA visitors is 52; 66% are over 50, with a lower proportion of parties with children. All income measures suggest that ROVA visitors have higher incomes than audiences at other Hudson River Valley sites. Education levels, however, are roughly comparable, with 68% of the total holding college or advanced degrees.

Audiences at the ROVA sites represent a wider geographic distribution than for the region as a whole, with more out-of-state and international visitors. ROVA visitors are more likely to come for historic interest and have general historic awareness of the site prior to visiting. They are also more likely to have planned their trip to ROVA in conjunction with other activities in the area and are more likely to come intentionally -- for recreation, sightseeing, education, or to bring visitors -- and less likely just to happen upon the place.

Overall, repeat visitors to the region's historic sites were younger, with higher incomes, than new visitors. For return visits, most respondents expressed interest in other historic sites, scenic attractions, fall foliage, parks and special events, including seasonal outdoor activities, craft and antique shows. Most visitors viewed special exhibitions as important and over one-third agreed that special exhibits would lead to more visits.

VISITOR OUTCOMES

The following visitor-based outcomes were identified as key criteria of the interpretive plan.

1. Encourage active visitor participation in the interpretive experience through questioning, investigation, and dialogue.
2. Connect the park experience to visitors' lives. Inspire audiences through the personal stories of the Roosevelts and Vanderbilts. Connect the legacy of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt to current events. Promote stewardship of the natural and historical resources of the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites and the Hudson River Valley.
3. Use the tangible, physical assets of ROVA sites to engage visitors in the stories. Offer insights into the people who lived and worked here. Put the sites in historical, cultural, and social contexts. Draw attention to the landscape and demonstrate the importance of the grounds and the relationship of the park to the Hudson River Valley.
4. Unify and coordinate park-wide interpretation. Help visitors to explore the whole site, not just the main houses. Connect thematically all the Roosevelt and Vanderbilt sites.
5. Take advantage of the strengths of the interpretive staff through expanded facilitated programs.
6. Improve visitor comfort and amenities, enhance wayfinding, create multiple transportation systems, and increase recreational and other informal, non-traditional education opportunities.

INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Three visitor-centered questions organize the park-wide interpretive experience. These investigative themes will be approached from different perspectives at each site through a number of sub-themes.

Who lived here? (Stories of the people)

- Insights into the people who lived and worked here.
- How this place reflected and affected their lives.

What happened here? (The place in context)

- The regional, national, and international importance of the site.
- Historical, cultural, social, political, natural, and agricultural perspectives.

What does it mean to me? (Connections to our lives today)

- *Inspiration* of those who lived and worked here.
- *Legacy* of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt.
- *Stewardship* of historic, cultural, and natural resources.

Sub-theme Examples

Park-wide:

- *Life on a Hudson River Estate*
- *Exceptional People with Complicated Lives*
- *A Gentleman's Farm*
- *Landscape Conservation and Stewardship*

Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt

“All that is within me cries out to go back to my home on the Hudson River”

- *A Laboratory for New Ideas*
- *“We are all on trial to show what democracy means.”s*

Top Cottage

- *The Place You Get Closest to FDR*
- *FDR as Architect*
- *The World Comes to Top Cottage*
- *Overcoming Disability*

Eleanor Roosevelt's Val-Kill

- *Eleanor Roosevelt's Place*
- *Big Ideas in a Small Place*
- *A Country Home*
- *Eleanor's Legacy*

Vanderbilt Mansion

- *The American Dream Realized*
- *Servants and Stewards*
- *The Gilded Age*
- *200 Years of Landscape*
- *A Work of Art*
- *Conservation Today*

INTERPRETIVE METHODS

A variety of interpretive strategies will engage a broad spectrum of visitors. *Exhibitions, signage, printed materials, on-line and on-site media* are self-directed by the visitor. *Facilitated programs* are conducted by National Park Service or other personnel and include tours, education programs, and special programs and events.

Exhibits, Signage, Printed Materials, and Media

Exhibits are broadly defined and include not only the historic structures, furnishings, and artifacts but also trails, grounds, and landscape, as well as orientation exhibitions, temporary displays, and interpretive devices.

Signage includes long-term interior and exterior signage such as the Waysides, as well as changeable / moveable signage such as room descriptions, temporary, and seasonal signage.

Printed materials directed to target audiences include interpretive maps, self-guided tours, informational brochures for each site, curriculum and teacher materials, and educational materials and activity guides for young visitors.

On-site and on-line media include a variety of technology including film, video, audio, sound and light effects, computer-based activities, PDA's or hand-held devices, and other emerging technologies.

Facilitated Programs

Conducted by Park Rangers or other personnel, facilitated programs are designed to meet the needs of particular audience segments.

Ranger-led tours have been the primary interpretive method at the sites, serving adults and family audiences. Building upon the strengths of the Park Rangers, tours are designed to take advantage of the individual interests and areas of focus of the Rangers, as well as the interests and background of the visitor group. A wider variety of tour options is proposed, including thematic and seasonal tours, tours of varying length and depth of content, and more open-ended discussion-based tours.

Education programs for students and teachers include curriculum-related on-site tours, pre- and post-visit materials, outreach programs that take place in the schools and community, and special programs for teachers.

Special programs and events attract and engage adults and families, with programs offered on a regular or occasional basis, including weekly or monthly family programs, seasonal programs and festivals, annual events, and community outreach programs. Many of these programs are produced in collaboration with CIP partners and external stakeholder organizations.

Programs for scholars and professionals include seminars and symposia, special tours, programs, and events designed to take advantage of the resources of the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites.

Collaborative programs build upon the strong, successful partnerships with key CIP partners and external stakeholders such as FDR Library and Museum, National Archives, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute, Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area. ROVA sites will continue to develop and expand joint programming efforts.

CIP PARTNERS & EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites are actively involved in many local and regional planning efforts, including the Hudson River Valley Greenway, the Hudson River National Heritage Area, the Hyde Park Trail, and the American Heritage River.

Expanded partnerships are critical to the success of the interpretive process. The park has identified strategic partners and stakeholders as critical to the implementation of the interpretive plan and proposes to strengthen or create programmatic partnerships and working relationships with the following CIP partners: National Archives Records Administration, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute (FERI); Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill (ERVK); Eleanor Roosevelt Val-Kill Cottage Preservation Project (Save America's Treasures); and Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association.

External Stakeholders are also expected to play an important role in the implementation of the interpretive plan and include the Hudson River Heritage Area / Greenway Conservancy, Dutchess County Tourism, Heritage Area Tourism Development, Town of Hyde Park, Frederick W. Vanderbilt Garden Association, Beatrix Farrand Garden Association (BFGA), Hyde Park Chamber of Commerce, Marist College (Hudson River Institute), Scenic Hudson, Open Space Institute, Hudson River Heritage, Wilderstein Preservation, Montgomery Place/Historic Hudson Valley, Morris House (Locust Grove), Mills Estate (Staatsburg), State Parks, as well as Congressional Representatives and Senators.

CONCLUSION

This interpretive plan is the result of thoughtful reflection and creative thinking by park staff, advisors, partners, and outside consultants. It is intended serve as a reference kit that identifies the philosophy, programmatic approach, and potential partnerships on which the park's interpretive development will be built. It is not a static document. This planning will be adjusted as the interpretive process continues, shaping it to fit audience needs, institutional goals, and budget, staff, and time constraints.

Translating these creative ideas into workable, sustainable programs that support the strategic and interpretive goals of the National Park Service and the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites can be done only through extensive use of partnerships, expanded funding, new ways of looking at interpretation, cutting-edge technology, and much dedicated effort. Collaboration with other agencies and institutions and support from the private sector are critical to achieving the goals of the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites.

*“The truth is found
when men are free
to pursue it.”*

FDR

1. MISSION

1.1 Park Mission Statement

"The National Park Service preserves the cultural and natural resources of the Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, and the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Sites and provides for their public appreciation and enjoyment."

1.2 Site Mission and Significance Statements

Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt

Mission Statement: Preserve the estate and memorial gravesite of the 20th century's most influential leader, the only United States president elected to four terms in office.

Significance: Springwood, Franklin D. Roosevelt's early home and lifelong retreat, so influenced the future New York State governor and U.S. president that the roots of his social, economic, and political legacy can be traced there.

Top Cottage

Mission Statement: Designed to accommodate FDR's disability, Top Cottage also became a place where close friends and important political allies could be brought together to discuss the state of the world — or simply to escape it for a while. This sense of retreat is preserved at the site today.

Significance: FDR designed and built Top Cottage as a place where he could return to private life when his second term as president ended. When he was elected to an unprecedented third term, FDR knew these plans would be delayed and began to see Top Cottage in a different light. He realized that the little retreat would be an excellent place to "escape the mob" at Springwood.

Top Cottage Themes: Top Cottage was never meant to replace Springwood as the president's home but rather to provide an escape from "the mob" as the president himself described the throngs who sought him out at the main residence.

Because FDR designed Top Cottage for his own use, he incorporated design features that, given his physical abilities, made it easier for him to enjoy the house.

FDR hoped to return from the White House to Top Cottage at the end of his presidency in an attempt to fade back into everyday life in Hyde Park and pursue his interests in local history.

Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site

Mission Statement: Preserve the site central to the personal and public development of Eleanor Roosevelt and to the issues of human rights on which she focussed throughout her lifetime.

Significance: Val-Kill is where Eleanor Roosevelt emerged as an individual, distinct from FDR. It is intimately associated with the most prominent and influential period of her life during which she pursued economic justice, racial and gender equality, equal education, universal human rights, social justice, and peace and the resolution of conflict.

Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site

Mission Statement: Preserve the estate of Frederick W. Vanderbilt, which represents and illustrates the economic, social, artistic, and cultural changes that occurred in the United States during the period of the American Renaissance.

Significance: One of the most intact examples of a gilded-age country place including a McKim, Mead and White designed main house, romantic era landscaped parkland and Vanderbilt era formal gardens. The site represents the rural domestic ideal of elite gilded-age families and provides context for the study of estate life for estate workers and household servants.

“You have to accept whatever comes and the only important thing is that you meet it with courage and the best you have to give.”

Eleanor Roosevelt

2. INTERPRETIVE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Comprehensive Interpretive Plan (CIP) addresses five main interpretive goals of the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites:

1. Meet major current challenges.
2. Build and serve new audiences.
3. Create a unified interpretive strategy.
4. Strengthen programmatic partnerships.
5. Address logistical challenges.

1. Meet major current challenges.

New and expanded interpretive strategies will help the park address the following key issues that require immediate attention.

Priority objectives are to

- Reverse dramatically declining visitation.
- Respond to the challenges, opportunities, and adjustments resulting from the opening of a major new visitor facility, the Henry A. Wallace Visitor and Education Center.
- Develop strategies to build visitation to and visibility of Top Cottage.
- Work within declining budgets for staff hires.

2. Build and serve new audiences.

Audience demographics are changing dramatically. The park's current primary audience is aging, and it is imperative to attract and engage new generations lacking direct experience with Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt and the events of their eras.

Audience objectives are to

- Attract young adults and family audiences.
- Cultivate repeat visitors.
- Serve schools and teachers.
- Stimulate regional tourism and marketing.

3. Create a unified interpretive strategy.

‘Different and more’ To make the visitor experience enjoyable as well as educational, the park must increase the number and diversity of interpretive methods. Compelling themes will relate the interpretive experience to visitors’ lives, tie the component sites together, and link the visitor experience inside the historic structures to the grounds and to the Hudson River Valley landscape.

Interpretive objectives are to

- Strengthen interpretive connections among the three Roosevelt sites, and between the Roosevelt and Vanderbilt sites.
- Integrate interpretation of the historic, cultural, and natural features of the sites.
- Develop key stories and themes to enliven public interpretation.
- Incorporate estate history as well as the landscape, gardens, and Hudson River more fully into the interpretive experience.
- Link the interpretation of the sites with the region and the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area.
- Present the park as an active, changing place; share new research and findings; interpret in-process restoration and conservation; and introduce park staff, historians, conservators, and researchers.
- Provide the interpretive foundation for the management plan.

4. Strengthen programmatic partnerships.

It is essential to coordinate programmatic efforts of CIP partners and external stakeholders.

Partnership objectives are to

- Bring together the existing partners and stakeholders in a collaborative planning process.
- Coordinate planning for current and future educational, interpretive, and marketing efforts.
- Support other local and regional planning efforts.
- Address the pre- and post-presidency stories at the NPS sites in conjunction with the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and Wallace Center to address more fully the presidential years.

CIP Partners include

- National Archives Records Administration, FDR Library
- Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute (FERI)
- Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill
- Eleanor Roosevelt Val-Kill Cottage Preservation Project (Save America's Treasures)
- Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association

External Stakeholders include

- Hudson River Heritage Area / Greenway Conservancy
- Dutchess County Tourism
- Heritage Area Tourism Development
- Town of Hyde Park
- Frederick W. Vanderbilt Garden Association
- Beatrix Farrand Garden Association (BFGA)
- Hyde Park Chamber of Commerce
- Marist College (Hudson River Institute)
- Scenic Hudson
- Open Space Institute

- Hudson River Heritage
- Wilderstein Preservation
- Montgomery Place/Historic Hudson Valley
- Morris House (Locust Grove)
- Mills Estate (Staatsburg) - State Parks

Congressional Representatives are

- Representative John Sweeney
- Representative Maurice Hinchey
- Senator Hillary Clinton
- Senator Charles Schumer

5. Address logistical challenges.

The size and scope of the sites present a number of challenges to the interpretive experience of the visitor. Pre-visit planning, ticketing, and coordination of visits to the ROVA sites and the FDR Library and Museum are key to the success of the overall visitor experience.

Logistical objectives are to

- Facilitate visit planning on-line and on-site.
- Develop ways to facilitate movement of visitors at the Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt, and throughout ROVA sites.
- Address the challenges presented by the physical distances between the sites and the time required to experience all areas.
- Integrate the NPS, FDR Library and Museum, and Wallace Center experiences.
- Deploy staff in the most effective ways.
- Address seasonal variations in attendance.

*“It is common sense
to take a method
and try it. If it fails,
admit it frankly and
try another. But above
all, try something!”*

FDR

3. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The key recommendations are divided into short-term (1-2 years) and mid- and long-term (3-10 years) and are based on the following working assumptions:

3.1 Working Assumptions

1. The opening of the Henry A. Wallace Visitor and Education Center in Fall 2003 changed the dynamic and the sequence of the visitor experience.
2. Interpretive planning and evaluation will continue to be an integral, ongoing process.
3. The working group will develop priorities and specific interpretive programs, exhibits, and materials based on short-, mid- and long-term recommendations.
4. Park staff will implement a phased interpretive plan.
5. Short-term recommendations assume current staffing, budget, and visitor levels.
6. Mid- and long-term recommendations may require additional staff and budget and would be tied to funding opportunities.
7. Park staff will develop proposals for long-term initiatives.
8. The General Management Plan will address logistical and management implications of the recommendations of the Interpretive Plan.

3.2 Short-Term Recommendations (1 - 2 years)

1. Meet Current Challenges.

The following recommendations are proposed for immediate consideration and implementation to meet the pressing challenges identified by park leadership:

Reverse dramatically declining visitation.

Through programming:

Build calendar of audience-driven events, working with CIP partners and integrating partner events (FERI, ERVK, etc.). Develop and promote public-programs series as regularly scheduled events to attract local residents and build repeat visitation.

Program ideas include the following:

- Outdoor family-friendly film series on the grounds of ROVA sites.
- “Drive-in FDR” film series, in collaboration with Scenic Hudson, at the drive-in theater. In addition to feature films related to FDR and his times, newsreels and the Wallace Center film could also be show.
- Expand upon Music in the Parks and Summer Evening Programs by Park Rangers on the ROVA grounds.
- Partner with the FDR Library and Museum to offer more book readings and signings in the Wallace Center, possibly sponsored and promoted by the local Barnes & Noble.
- Highlight recreational opportunities and events, including hiking, kayaking, nature walks, and bird watching, in collaboration with groups such as Hudson River Valley Greenway, Open Space Institute, New York Parks Conservation Association, Nature Conservancy, national and local Audubon Societies, local and regional land trusts.
- Offer seasonal programs such as ice boating demonstrations, apple pressing, and sheep shearing.
- “Tree in a Box” program with FDR-related interpretive materials.
- Landscape tours, including the virgin forest.

Through marketing, promotion, and partnerships:

Target new marketing efforts to special interest groups (see Section 4.3) through list exchanges, cooperative promotions, on-line capturing of names to ROVA websites, special offers, etc.

- Strengthen relationships with Hudson Valley heritage tourism and economic development initiatives.
- Develop on-line ‘e-mailing list’ and send regular monthly program announcements.
- Capture attendees to Wallace Center events for repeat visits to ROVA. They have already made their way to the site once and should be encouraged to return. These audiences include local residents as well as visitors from New York City, western Connecticut, western Massachusetts, and Albany and represent an important new constituency for the park.
- Promote ROVA through Public Service Announcements (PSAs) or film trailers in regional theaters.
- Promote family visits to school-group audiences through take-home material for students and teachers, including flyers, calendars, and discounts coupons for the store.
- Tie in to local conservation events and efforts and tap into the active conservation constituency.
- Create pilot-program and marketing partnerships with local cultural institutions, such as the Culinary Institute, Dia:Beacon, and Minetta Brooks.
- Use existing gardens and new kitchen gardens to attract the “Slow Food Movement” and the Hudson River Valley and Dutchess County produce initiative.
- Explore “Agritourism” opportunities at ROVA. Agritourism, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, can be defined as “inviting the public onto your farm or ranch to purchase products, learn or have fun.”
- Create Web links to ROVA from partner websites.
- Launch a “Plan Your Tour” website component.
- Tap into local college market to attract visitors to ROVA sites during parents weekends, graduation, and alumni events.
- Attract New York City metro residents through marketing, train stops, jitney from Poughkeepsie, and partnerships.
- Create day-trip for HRV senior centers within a 100-mile radius, in conjunction with local destinations.
- Increase visibility of NPS Rangers at local events, partner activities, and other public programs. Promote “the uniform.”

- Improve visitor amenities including seating, picnic tables, food service, and wayfinding to offer a more comfortable experience and encourage repeat visitation.

Respond to the challenges, opportunities and adjustments resulting from the opening of the major new visitor facility, the Henry A. Wallace Visitor and Education Center.

- Take advantage of the Wallace Center to focus visitor attention on the “Roosevelt Experience” as the major interpretive goal for this season. Promote the full package (“For \$22 you get the whole story, all the sites”), reinforcing the concept that Springwood, Top Cottage, and Val-Kill are really one story, connected by the evocative landscape shaped by FDR. Continue the story, physically and intellectually, through Ranger-led interpretation and self-guided Waysides throughout the grounds.
- Use the shuttle bus, running at regular intervals and connecting all sites, for example ‘door to door’ every half-hour. Interpretation could be provided on the bus, using a grounds tour audio loop and a “Roosevelt’s Hyde Park” component, where possible, including Hyde Park sites such as the local library.
- Create a “Fala Trail,” using Fala as an icon and starting at the Fala statue at the Wallace Center, to lead visitors from the Center to the ROVA Waysides. The first phase of the trail would be a short route around the area nearest the Wallace Center, the Library, FDR home and garden, including the new dog houses. A second phase would connect to Val-Kill, where Fala moved after FDR’S death. Tie-ins at ROVA to the “Fala Gala” at Wilderstein could help promote attendance, and a Fala costume character could make regular appearances at local events.
- Civic Engagement could be a major focus of new programs. For example, a series built around the 2004 Presidential Debates might offer participants the opportunity to watch the televised debates in the auditorium, followed by a discussion by a panel of historians, scholars, journalists, and other informed commentators. Topics might include issues that faced FDR in his elections, how campaigning has changed since FDR’s time, and current events and FDR’s legacy.
- Use the Wallace Center’s food service as an interpretive opportunity. Offer box lunches to encourage picnics at Val-Kill and Top Cottage. Create menus based on foods the Roosevelts ate and served to their guests, for example “hot dogs fit for a king.” Menus, lunch boxes, and paper goods could have information about the Roosevelts. Food offerings could feature local Hudson River produce.
- Take advantage of the auditorium and four program spaces to offer new public programs (see program recommendations in preceding section), including community events and evening programs.

- Increase collaboration with the FDR Library and Museum and the National Archives for public activities and educational programs in the new Wallace Center.
- Increase collaborations with other site partners such as FERI and ERVK, with the Regional Visitor Center, and with the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area.
- Host and co-host symposia, including a visit to the relevant ROVA site, on CIP theme-related topics and connecting history to today whenever possible. Topics might include design for disabilities, vernacular architecture, current events and FDR's legacy, including civil rights, the issue of racial profiling, Social Security, etc.

Develop strategies to build Top Cottage visibility and visitation.

- Build a public relations effort and hold major opening events celebrating the addition of furnishings and artifacts. Promote new opening hours, Trail, and special Ranger-led programs.
- Use Val-Kill–Top Cottage Trail to physically draw visitors to Top Cottage. Plant the edges of the trail where it is not particularly scenic and screen it from developed areas and private yards. Although this was not really part of the FDR tree farm, perhaps specimen trees could be planted.
- Promote Top Cottage as a recreation, trail, and picnic destination, targeting hikers and other recreation groups. Add picnic tables to grassy field to the south.
- Use shuttle bus for visitor transportation to Top Cottage from the Wallace Center and other ROVA sites.
- Install temporary, seasonal, inexpensive, weather-resistant vinyl signage to welcome visitors at the entry to Val-Kill and to Top Cottage, and orientation signage at the Val-Kill parking lot and at other strategic locations to encourage visits and connections to Top Cottage.
- Focus on the intimacy of the Ranger-facilitated discussions at Top Cottage and the opportunity to “get close to FDR” by handling period objects, books, and furnishings.
- Create touchstones to the stories and encourage dialogue through scrapbooks, photographs, postcards, political cartoons, and paintings; copies of the books in FDR's library at Top Cottage; reproductions (such as the Washington desk) and period furnishings in the living room; wicker furniture and rockers on the veranda; and original objects and artifacts on display in the bedroom.
- Connect Top Cottage with the bigger FDR story with a driving tour of Hyde Park using a new map and CD or audio cassette.

- Target programming and marketing to special interest groups including the Open Land Institute and organizations for scholars, historians, conservationists, architects, landscape architects, and people with disabilities.
- Develop self-led interpretation at Top Cottage including interpretive signage on the veranda, peek-in windows, printed guides, and audio tours.
- Offer Top Cottage to partners such as FERI, Bard College, and the National Heritage Area in exchange for fees and admission to programming and other CIP theme-related events.
- Create “Memories of Top Cottage,” an oral history project and special events featuring prominent guests such as Robert Morgenthau and Arthur Schlesinger Jr., as well as local people who visited Top Cottage.

Work within declining budgets for staff hires.

- Create more self-guided tours (printed guides, audio tours, PDAs).
- Partner with colleges and other institutions and organizations to recruit seasonal interns and volunteers.

2. Build and serve new audiences.

In addition to the recommendations listed under Current Challenges, the park should continually work to better understand the demographics of ROVA audiences, and continue to develop and promote interpretive programs and products that truly respond to visitors’ needs and interests.

- Evaluate new interpretive initiatives for continuation and / or expansion.
- Assess the level of public awareness of ROVA.
- Measure visitor understanding of, and interest in, interpretive messages. Assess achievement of interpretive and strategic objectives using a variety of evaluation methods such as pre-and post-visit questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups.

3. Create a unified interpretive strategy.

- Use overarching interpretive themes to help visitors make connections among their experiences at the individual sites of the park and to their own lives.

- Restructure tours to move visitors through the entire site and grounds, not just the main buildings.
- Develop orientation center exhibits at Val-Kill Playhouse and the Vanderbilt Pavilion as ‘1st Stops,’ places to gather visitors, tell the back stories, and ease the burden on tours to tell the whole story.
- Create changing displays to appeal to different audiences that interpret work-in-progress and behind-the-scenes activities such as conservation, restoration, and research.
- Develop active lexicon of terms and place names to ensure consistency of use in signage and interpretive materials, including a list of terms and their history.
- Better incorporate under-utilized resources in the park increasing the use of Stone Cottage for interpretive activities and events, developing a half-hour Vanderbilt Estate walking tour, including interpretation of the Coach House and enhancing the connecting trail between Val-Kill and Top Cottage.

4. Strengthen programmatic partnerships.

- Increase programs co-sponsored by CIP partners and external stakeholders.
- Use programmatic partnerships to enhance staff development.
- Establish a process for ongoing input and interchange between scholars and staff, particularly in dealing with new information and difficult questions.
- Develop system for summarizing and disseminating new information to staff (e.g., reviews of new books, articles, websites, and background on new acquisitions).
- Create central staff reference library, with reference material organized by sites and themes.

5. Address logistical challenges.

- Implement park-wide staff reorganization to better serve target audience segments: general public, education programs, special events.
- Develop a facilities improvement plan to support interpretive goals.
- Prioritize interpretive initiatives to prepare for the General Management Plan.

3.3 Mid- and Long-Term Recommendations (3 - 10 years)

1. Integrate new Transportation Center into the ROVA interpretive program and Wallace Center experience. Develop transportation system of jitneys and interpretive trails within the park and eventually linked to key tourist transportation hubs.
2. Emphasize landscape and garden interpretation through thematic tours, special programs, additional Waysides, interpretive signage on trails and transportation routes, and restoration of grounds and viewsheds.
3. Offer new interpretive methods to get the messages across, including *Exhibits, Signage, Printed Materials, Media, Tours, Programs* and *Special Events*.
4. Create "1st Stop" orientation center exhibits at Springwood Carriage House (TIC) to tell the stories of the Roosevelt family and the functioning of the estate.

*“Treat people right
and 90% of the time
they will treat you
right also.”*

FDR

4. AUDIENCE

Interpretation at the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites is audience-driven and is designed to fulfill audience objectives and respond to the needs and interests of a variety of key audience segments.

4.1 Audience Objectives:

The ROVA sites are seeking to

- Attract and serve younger audiences
- Continue to serve current visitors
- Expand repeat visitor base
- Build upon local and regional tourism

4.2 Current Audience

In 2002 the annual visitation to the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites was 215,123; with 100,558 visitors to the Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt Historic Site (including the FDR Library and Museum); 28,996 to Val-Kill, and 85,569 to the Vanderbilt Mansion.

The Preliminary Report of Interviews at Historic Sites in the Hudson River Valley, Summer and Fall, 2002, conducted by Marist College, indicated several interesting characteristics of visitors to the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites compared to overall visitors to the region's historic sites.

Visitors to the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites (ROVA) had an average age of 52.3 (compared to 46.2 for the total sample), 66% are over 50 (compared to 50% overall), with a lower proportion of parties with children (8% compared to 17.4%). All income measures suggest that ROVA visitors have higher incomes, for example 63% have incomes above \$75,000, compared with 55% for the total sample. Education levels, however, are roughly comparable, with 68% of the total holding college or advanced degrees.

There may be a wider geographic distribution for the visitor to the ROVA sites than for the region as a whole with 42% from New York State as opposed to 60% for the region, and with more out-of-state and international visitors. ROVA visitors are more likely to come for historic interest (32% compared to 21% overall). Within the regional population, there is a larger proportion from Westchester (27.3% at ROVA versus 16.2% overall).

ROVA visitors are more likely to have general historic awareness of the site prior to the visit. They are also more likely to have planned their trips to ROVA even if they are in the area for another purpose such as a family vacation or business trip, and are more likely to come for recreational activity, scenery, education, and to bring visitors, and less likely just to happen upon the place, having "seen signs on the road." Overall, repeat visitors to the region's historic sites were younger, with higher income than new visitors. For return visits, most respondents expressed interest in other historic sites, scenic attractions, fall foliage, parks, and special events, including seasonal outdoor activities and craft and antique shows.

Visitors to ROVA sites spent more than one hour at each site except for Top Cottage, for which there were fewer surveys completed. The median length of visits for all sites, except Top Cottage, was 60 minutes, with the mean visits even longer for FDR Library, Val-Kill and the Vanderbilt Mansion, and slightly shorter for the grounds and trails. Most visitors viewed special exhibitions as important (78%) and over one-third agreed that special exhibits would lead to more visits.

4.3 Key Target Audience Segments:

Specific audience segments were identified during the interpretive planning process, with consideration given to their needs and interests. They include the following:

General Public

- First-time visitors
- Repeat visitors
- Family visitors
- Heritage tourists to the Hudson River Valley

Students and Teachers

- Elementary school
- Middle school
- High school

Professionals

- Scholars
- Historians
- Conservationists
- Architects
- Landscape architects

Special Groups

- HRV Senior Centers
- Book Clubs
- College students, families, alumni
- FDR and ER devotees
- Local residents
- Garden clubs
- National Park Passport holders
- Design and decorative arts aficionados
- Women's organizations
- Social and human rights activists
- Diverse cultural groups
- Labor organizations
- Visitors to other presidential sites

“The influence you exert is through your own life and what you’ve become yourself.”

Eleanor Roosevelt

5. VISITOR OUTCOMES

The following visitor-based outcomes were identified as key criteria in the development of the interpretive plan.

1. Encourage active visitor participation in the interpretive experience through questioning, investigation, and dialogue between visitors and sites, visitors and Rangers, and among visitors.
2. Connect the park experience to visitors' own lives.
 - Inspire through the personal stories of the Roosevelts and the Vanderbilts.
 - Connect the legacy of the work of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt to current events.
 - Promote stewardship of the natural and historical resources of the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites and the Hudson River Valley.
3. Use the tangible, physical assets of the ROVA sites to engage visitors in the stories.
 - Use the real places and the tangible evidence of the sites to tell the intangible stories.
 - Talk about real people: offer insights into the people who lived and worked here.
 - Connect to real events: put the sites in context -- local, national, international / historical, cultural, social, political, natural, agricultural.
 - Draw attention to the landscape: demonstrate the importance of the grounds and the relationship of the park to the Hudson River Valley.
4. Unify and coordinate park-wide interpretation.
 - Help visitors to explore the whole site, not just the main houses.
 - Expand the interpretive circle out from the main houses to include the outbuildings, the grounds, and the Hudson River Valley.
 - Connect thematically all the Roosevelt and Vanderbilt sites and have themes for individual sites reference each other.
 - Use park-wide themes as springboards for different types of interpretive programs and methods.
5. Take advantage of the strengths of the interpretive staff through expanded facilitated programs.
 - Offer programs based on visitor interest and Ranger expertise.
 - Use tours as a framework -- not as a rigid interpretive system.
 - Accommodate change and amendment.
 - Allow opportunities for individualized interpretation.
6. Improve visitor comfort.
 - Offer a variety of interpretive choices.
 - Improve wayfinding (signage, maps) and consistency of nomenclature.
 - Create multiple transportation systems.
 - Increase recreational and other informal, non-traditional education opportunities.

- Improve visitor amenities (seating, restrooms, food service).

*“Eternal truths will
neither be true nor
eternal unless they
have fresh meaning for
every social situation.”*

FDR

6. INTERPRETIVE THEMES

6.1 Themes

Three visitor-centered questions organize the park-wide interpretive experience. These investigative themes will be approached from different perspectives at each site through a number of sub-themes.

Who lived here? (Stories of the people)

- Insights into the people who lived and worked here.
- How this place reflected and affected their lives.

What happened here? (The place in context)

- The regional, national, and international importance of the site.
- Historical, cultural, social, political, natural, and agricultural perspectives.

What does it mean to me? (Connections to our lives today)

- *Inspiration* of those who lived and worked here.
- *Legacy* of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt.
- *Stewardship* of historic, cultural, and natural resources.

6.2 Sub-Theme Examples

The sub-theme are organized into park-wide examples, followed by examples for each of the component sites: Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt / Springwood, Top Cottage, Val-Kill, and Vanderbilt Mansion.

6.2.1 Park-wide:

Who lived here?

Life on a Hudson River Estate

Visitors are curious not only about the Roosevelts and the Vanderbilts but also the servants, estate workers, and others connected to the site. Throughout the site, interpretation will focus on the many people who lived and worked here and how this place reflected and affected their lives.

Exceptional People with Complicated Lives

Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt were exceptional people with complicated lives. The different Roosevelt sites provide rich material from which to interpret their relationships to each other, their family, and those that lived and worked on the estate. The personal evolution of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt is evidenced throughout the sites, with many opportunities to deal directly with frequently asked questions about their intimate lives.

What happened here?

A Gentleman's Farm

The Roosevelt and Vanderbilt estates provide a window into the development of Hudson River estates from the 1600s to the present day. Both the Roosevelt and the Vanderbilt estates reflect the personal values of their respective owners, as well as the historical, cultural, social, political, natural, and agricultural values of their times, allowing visitors to compare and contrast the different approaches of these two families in the development and use of their estates.

What does it mean to me?

Landscape Conservation and Stewardship

The Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites, along with the FDR Library and Museum, are models of conservation and stewardship of historic and natural resources. FDR took an active role in preserving his legacy for future generations. His library was the nation's first presidential library, and he took an active interest in its design. FDR donated his estate to the National Park Service and incorporated the Vanderbilt estate to conserve the sites. Both estates are important for their gardens, plantings, viewsheds, historic landscape, and relationship to the Hudson River. The Roosevelt site contains many tree farms that were part of FDR's forestry work, while the Vanderbilt site contains one of the finest collections of native and exotic specimen trees in North America.

6.2.2 Home of FDR:

Who lived here?

“All that is within me cries out to go back to my home on the Hudson River.”-FDR
From his birth in 1882, FDR was one of a tight-knit clan that valued tradition and continuity. The Roosevelts had ties to the Hudson River Valley dating to the 17th century. To young Franklin, whose father passed on to him his love of the outdoors, the estate’s woods and fields were paradise. When he married Eleanor, the young couple moved in with his mother Sara at Springwood, in whose name the house remained until her death in 1941. During FDR’s years as New York State governor and as U.S. president, Springwood was the nucleus of his life and career. The strong sense of continuity that FDR experienced at Springwood strongly shaped his personality, world view, and relationships to others. FDR’s lifelong emotional connection to the property and to Hyde Park provided him with a place for reflection, solitude, personal restoration, and was a setting for world-changing decisions.

What happened here?

A Laboratory for New Ideas

Many of FDR’s state, national, and international policies and actions were shaped, formed, or influenced by his life at Hyde Park. The estate served as a lab for FDR’s ideas about agriculture, conservation, and the environment. FDR used Springwood as a backdrop for the presidency.

What does it mean to me?

“We are all on trial to show what democracy means.” - Eleanor Roosevelt
Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt were two of the most influential figures of the 20th century, and their lives spanned some of the most dramatic and challenging events in modern history. The Roosevelt legacy has many parallels and connections to the lives of today’s visitors. We share many of their concerns and aspirations, including, for example, the meaning of democracy, the qualities and risks of leadership, and the promotion of environmental conservation, nuclear energy, and human rights. Many New Deal programs and initiatives shaped the structure and institutions of our society today, including Social Security, the National Park Service, and the United Nations.

6.2.3 Top Cottage

Who lived here?

The Place You Get Closest to FDR

Top Cottage is FDR's place. Here he took control of how he wanted to lead his life. He designed Top Cottage as a place for him to be himself, the place he wanted to retire to, the place to write his memoirs. It is also where FDR's personal relationships can be explored through photos, diaries, and letters.

FDR as Architect

Top Cottage exemplifies FDR's interest in architecture. It is the most important expression of FDR's ideas about architecture and reflects his love of the Dutch Colonial stone buildings of the Hudson Valley. He was intimately involved in the design and details of the house, both in its aesthetics and accessibility. The relationship of Top Cottage to the landscape and vistas of the Catskills show his sensitivity to nature, and the house demonstrates his interest in local vernacular architecture. This interest was also reflected in the design of National Park structures across the country.

What happened here?

The World Comes to Top Cottage

Top Cottage witnessed much history in the making between its completion in 1939 and the president's death in 1945. It opened officially with a picnic for King George VI and Queen Elizabeth of England. Winston Churchill came to the cottage several times during World War II. Roosevelt met with Madam Chiang Kai-shek and many world leaders as well as important figures in his administration and the Allied leadership here. At Top Cottage Roosevelt mulled over his next move in the greatest war in history. (Excerpted from *The President as Architect: Franklin D. Roosevelt's Top Cottage*)

What does it mean to me?

Overcoming Disability

Top Cottage has symbolic importance, commemorating the achievements of a person with disabilities. More than a half-century after FDR's death most people still don't fully grasp the fact that he was unable to stand unaided, let alone walk, and was entirely dependent on his valet for his most basic needs. Determined to be more independent, he carefully designed the one-story house with ramps, lowered windows, and special features that freed him to move about in his wheelchair. One of America's first barrier-free buildings, Top Cottage provides an unparalleled opportunity to educate the public about FDR's disability and about accessibility in general. (Excerpted from *The President as Architect: Franklin D. Roosevelt's Top Cottage*.)

6.2.4 Eleanor Roosevelt's Val-Kill

"My heart is in the cottage....The peace of it is divine." Eleanor Roosevelt

The Long Range Interpretive Plan for the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site (2002) proposed a series of theme statements. The following examples integrate themes proposed in the Plan as well as ideas developed in the interpretive planning process undertaken for this report.

Who lived here?

Eleanor Roosevelt's Place

Val-Kill was Eleanor Roosevelt's place: It reflected her style and interests, and provided a space where she could live on her own terms. Through Val-Kill one can come to appreciate the personal development of Eleanor Roosevelt, discover that she was a complicated person, and understand the importance of her friendships.

What happened here?

Big Ideas in a Small Place

The personal freedom that Eleanor Roosevelt enjoyed at Val-Kill fostered her intellectual and emotional growth as an individual and encouraged her to develop the site into a laboratory of thought and action, engaging visitors from all walks of life and from around the world in an exchange of ideas on a wide variety of issues. Val-Kill was a laboratory or think tank for social activism and demonstrates how Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt blended the personal and the political aspects of their lives.

A Country Home

Val-Kill was a country home. Its informal atmosphere, blended with its natural setting, provided the Roosevelt family, friends, and invited guests with opportunities to enjoy simple pleasures and nurture personal relationships removed from the pressures of public life and the formality of Springwood.

What does it mean to me?

Eleanor's Legacy

What lessons can be learned today from Eleanor Roosevelt's dogged advocacy of human rights and world peace, her firm resistance to social injustice, her proud patriotism, and her commitment to individual and government action? What issues that concerned her continue to face us today?

6.2.5 Vanderbilt Mansion

“...I have always thought of the Hyde Park place with the greatest interest and affection ... it is the only country place in the North, which has been well kept by for nearly two centuries. It would be a wonderful thing to have the maintenance of it assured for all time.”

- Franklin Delano Roosevelt, writing of Vanderbilt Mansion to Mrs. James L. Van Alen, September 30, 1939

Who lived here?

The American Dream Realized

In pre-industrial America, one's position in society was based largely on ancestry. America's new wealthy elite redefined this requirement to more democratic ideals: One's value derived from one's accomplishments; social standing would be defined by homes, entertainment, clothing, jewels, income, and philanthropic interests. The Vanderbilts exemplified this new ideal as they looked to the noble families of Europe for a lifestyle worthy of emulation. At the time they were created, the Vanderbilt homes embodied the full potential of the American Dream. Today, the Vanderbilt estate also offers important opportunities to compare and contrast FDR and the Vanderbilts.

Servants and Stewards

Behind-the-scenes explorations of the Mansion and outbuildings, dramatically demonstrates the differences between lives of the Vanderbilts and their social circle and those of the servants and workers on their estates. The intact survival of the estate's service areas provides a rare opportunity for interpretation and public access to these spaces. Through these areas, the management and daily operations of the household and estate staff, as well as the staff's socio-economic can be explored.

What happened here?

The Gilded Age

“The Vanderbilt estate is a representation of a unique way of life, a class, a time in our history. In terms of architecture, interiors, mechanical systems, road systems and landscape, the Vanderbilt Mansion NHS, is a remarkably complete example of a gilded-age country place, illustrating the political, economic, social, cultural, and demographic changes that occurred as America industrialized in the years after the Civil War.” (Excerpted from Passport stamp text)

200 Years of Landscape

The Vanderbilt estate is a landscape with a 200-year history. Five generations of owners oversaw the development of estate grounds in this scenic area of the Hudson River Valley, with each owner adding to the work of the previous ones. Although there are important cultural landscapes throughout the region, they are often fragmented and incomplete as historical records or derive their importance from a single owner and era.

By contrast, the Vanderbilt National Historic Site landscape demonstrates a layering of historical periods over four ownerships with an impressive continuity. The level of integrity – to the extent to which the existing conditions embody those of historic importance – is also unique. (Excerpted from the Cultural Landscape Report for Vanderbilt Mansion Historic Site, Volume 1: Site History, Existing Conditions, and Analysis, 1992)

What does it mean to me?

A Work of Art

The unusually high quality of the architecture and aesthetics of the Vanderbilt Mansion make it one of the finest examples of the work of McKim, Mead and White, one of America's most important architectural firms. The Vanderbilt Mansion and grounds are exemplary examples of the art, architecture, decorative arts, and material culture of the Gilded Age.

Conservation Today

National Park Service preservation and conservation activities at the sites open a compelling window onto the issues and challenges of stewardship. They offer a model of citizen volunteer efforts, such as the restoration and maintenance of the Vanderbilt formal gardens, as well as insight into the work of park staff and other professionals in the research, preservation, and conservation of our natural and historic resources.

*“You must do the
things that you think
you cannot do.”*

Eleanor Roosevelt

7. INTERPRETIVE METHODS

7.1 Overview

A variety of interpretive strategies will engage a broad spectrum of visitors. These strategies are defined and outlined below, followed by examples of current interpretation and a summary of proposed interpretive initiatives. *Exhibitions, signage, printed materials, on-line and on-site media* are self-directed by the visitor. *Facilitated programs* are conducted by NPS or other personnel and include tours, education programs, and special programs and events.

Exhibitions, Signage, Printed Materials, and Media

Exhibits:

Exhibits are broadly defined and include not only the historic structures, furnishings, and artifacts but also trails, grounds, and landscape, as well as orientation exhibitions, temporary displays, and interpretive devices.

Historic structures: homes, outbuildings

Objects and artifacts: historic furnishings, ephemera

Grounds and Landscape: gardens, historic plantings, trees, viewsheds, riverfront

Trails: Carriage Trail, Hyde Park Trail, Top Cottage Trail

Orientation centers: Henry A. Wallace Visitor and Education Center, Springwood Carriage House, Val-Kill Playhouse, Vanderbilt Pavilion

Temporary displays: Val-Kill Industries exhibit, seasonal displays, ‘Behind-the-Scenes’ explanations

Interpretive devices: scrapbooks; hands-on activities; acoustic-guides; and audio, video, and computer-based components

Signage:

Signage includes long-term interior and exterior signage such as the Waysides, as well as changeable / moveable signage such as room descriptions, temporary and seasonal signage.

Printed Materials:

Printed materials directed to target audiences include interpretive maps, self-guided tours, information brochures for each site, curriculum and teacher materials, educational materials and activity guides for young visitors.

Media:

On-site and on-line media includes a variety of technology including film, video, audio, sound and light effects, computer-based activities, PDAs or hand-held devices, and other emerging technologies.

Facilitated Programs

Conducted by Park Rangers or other personnel, facilitated programs are designed to meet the needs of particular audience segments and include tours, education programs, special programs and events, and collaborative programs.

Tours:

Serving adults and family audiences, Ranger-led tours have been the primary interpretive method at the sites. Building upon the strengths of the Park Rangers, tours are designed to take advantage of the individual interests and areas of focus of the Rangers, as well as the interests and background of individual visitor groups.

A more flexible variety of tour options is proposed, including thematic and seasonal tours, tours of varying length and depth of content, and more open-ended, discussion-based tours.

Education Programs:

Programs for students and teachers include curriculum-related on-site tours, pre- and post-visit materials, outreach programs that take place in the schools and community, and special programs for teachers.

Special Programs and Events:

To attract and engage adults and families an expanded menu of programs, offered on a regular or occasional basis, would include weekly or monthly family programs, seasonal programs and festivals, annual events, and community outreach programs. Many of these programs are held in collaboration with partner and stakeholder organizations.

Programs for Scholars and Professionals:

A number of seminars and symposia, special tours, programs, and events take advantage of the resources of the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites.

Collaborative Programs:

Building upon the strong, successful partnerships with key CIP partners and external stakeholders -- such as with FDR Library and Museum, National Archives, FERI, ERVK, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, and Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area -- the park will continue to develop and expand joint programming efforts.

7.2 Current Interpretive Methods and Examples of Proposed Initiatives

The following is divided into two main sections: ‘Exhibitions, Signage, Printed Materials, and Media’ and ‘Facilitated Programs.’ Each of these sections lists examples of Current Interpretive Methods and of Proposed Interpretive Initiatives.

Current Exhibitions, Signage, Printed Materials, and Media:

Exhibits:

In addition to the historic Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Val-Kill, and the Vanderbilt Mansion, Top Cottage has been opened to visitors. The new Henry A. Wallace Visitor and Education Center opened in November 2003. The special temporary exhibition *Val-Kill Industries: From Ideal to New Deal* was presented September through November 2003. The new Val-Kill orientation exhibit will open in 2004.

Signage:

A new wayfinding system and signage is being implemented and will be evaluated upon completion.

Six new Wayside signs are being installed throughout the park.

Printed Materials:

New curriculum-related educational materials are being developed.

Media:

An on-line initiative with Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Projects was launched in 2003.

Examples of Proposed Exhibitions, Signage, Printed Materials, and Media:

The following are examples of the interpretive methods currently under consideration.

Exhibits:

The Home of FDR: Current furnishings will be augmented with additional artifacts such as FDR’s stamp collection and other mementos of his childhood. Vehicles and carriages will be displayed in the outbuildings. New outdoor audio and ‘peek-in’ windows with theatrical lighting will allow visitors to see into FDR’s study and perhaps the kitchen from the exterior of the house.

Top Cottage: The main floor will be refurbished with period furniture, furnishings and photos. Thematic scrapbooks will be used as an interpretive tool to highlight different stories such as ‘Visitors to Top Cottage,’ ‘FDR as Architect,’ ‘Overcoming Disability,’ and ‘FDR's Personal Relationships.’

Val-Kill: Additional furnishings and artifacts, such as Eleanor's Roosevelt's silver will help recreate the domestic feeling of the house. Thematic scrapbooks will include 'Val-Kill Visitors,' 'Who lived here?' 'Eleanor's Legacy,' and 'My Day' columns. Adapt the Playhouse as a setting for storytelling and other activities.

Vanderbilt Mansion: The entrance hall will be given a human scale through the addition of carpets, animal skins, sofas, and knickknacks. Trees and high quality silk flowers will be added to the interior to facilitate discussion about the operations of the greenhouses and gardens. Restoration activities, such as the re-creation and installation of new fabric in Mrs. Vanderbilt's bedroom and the red guest room, will be interpreted to visitors through special displays. Recorded period music will be played.

Signage:

Additional Waysides will be installed, especially highlighting the grounds and the relationship to the viewsheds and the Hudson River. Changing signage will focus attention on 'behind-the-scenes' activities and changes, new information, and acquisitions on the site.

Printed Materials:

Tear-off interpretive maps for each site as well as the Carriage Trail will be distributed at the Wallace Center and at the orientation centers at each site. A genealogy handout will be available. A McKim, Mead and White brochure will be available at the Vanderbilt Mansion.

Media:

www.nps.gov: The Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites might partner to link all the Presidential / Roosevelt related sites or create links to these places from the ROVA website.

Computer stations at Val-Kill will access a 'My Day' database, allowing visitors to read Eleanor Roosevelt's columns.

Audio stations will play recordings of Eleanor Roosevelt from the National Archives.

Acousti-guides will be used to present different self-guided thematic tours. For example, visitors might experience the Vanderbilt Mansion three different ways – through the architecture, as a gilded-age estate, and through the eyes of the servants and estate workers.

Current Facilitated Programs:

Tours

Ranger-led tours are the primary interpretive method. Tours are offered at all of the sites. A newly added Top Cottage 'seminar' style tour was piloted in 2003. Thematic tours for the public include 'Technology and the Gilded Age / The Development of Modern America' and 'Servants and Stewards.'

Education Programs

Current education programs at Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites serve students in grades 2 –12. New curriculum-based programs were developed to meet New York State curriculum goals. Thematic programs take place at the Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt, its grounds and outbuildings (“Hard Times,” “Growing Up at Springwood,” “The President’s Petunias,” “FDR as Tree Farmer,” and “Conservation, Home of FDR”), at the Vanderbilt Mansion (“Servants and Stewards,” “Technology and the Gilded Age: The Development of Modern America”) and in the classroom (“Eleanor’s Suitcase”).

Special Programs and Events:

Seasonal and other special programs include author readings and book signings, “Music in the Parks,” and “Summer Evening Programs.”

Programs for Scholars and Professionals:

Seminars, lectures, and workshops are developed by ROVA and in collaboration with CIP partners.

Examples of Proposed Facilitated Programs:

Tours:

A new environment tour will explore the gardens and landscapes of the entire site, including the Roosevelt, Val-Kill, Bellefield, and Vanderbilt properties. A self-guided driving tour will explore FDR’s Hyde Park and regional and Hudson River Valley connections. Other new specialized tours will appeal to target audience groups. Proposed tour topics include design and material culture, architecture, conservation, gardens, Hudson River Valley Estates, the work of McKim, Mead and White, and behind-the-scenes “Conservator’s Tours.” Package tours could be developed with the Culinary Institute and other regional tourist destinations.

Education Programs:

School programs will include progressive tours by grade to encourage return visits. Expanded teacher training and mentoring will reach deeper into the classroom.

Special Programs and Events:

Weekend and holiday family programs such as hands-on craft programs, storytelling at the Val-Kill playhouse, food festivals, outdoor screenings and performances.

Seasonal events such as Christmas tree plantings, harvesting of fruit in the orchards, a Victory Garden program for children and/or adults will help interpret the agricultural history of the sites.

Costumed interpretation might be used to explore the different roles of the owners and workers on the Vanderbilt Estate. A special program might explore the life of servants and employees across the park and over time.

Recreational activities will be used as interpretive tools, including sunset watching, special hikes and walks, concerts on the lawn, picnics throughout the sites, and tea on the porch of Val-Hill.

Recurring *lecture series* will address park-wide themes, especially those not always included in daily interpretation. Special *speaker's forums* in conjunction with *symposia*, *seminars*, and *book events* will enable staff to spend time with the participating scholars and guest speakers.

*“The only way to make
a friend is to be one.”*

FDR

8. CIP PARTNERS & EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites are actively involved in many local and regional planning efforts, including the Hudson River Valley Greenway, the Hudson River National Heritage Area, the Hyde Park Trail, and the American Heritage River.

Expanded partnerships are critical to the success of the interpretive process. The park has identified strategic partners and stakeholders as vital to the implementation of the interpretive plan and proposes to strengthen or create programmatic partnerships and working relationships with the following, for example:

- other Vanderbilt properties including The Elms and the Shelburne Farms;
- International Site Museums of Conscience including Ellis Island and the Lower Eastside Tenement Museum in New York City;
- the White House and other presidential sites;
- Campobello and Warm Springs, including the formalization of staff exchange opportunities;
- Hyde Park Railroad Museum, to create programs or host events celebrating the railroad and the Vanderbilts;
- Vassar and/or other music programs to build playing the Vanderbilt Mansion piano into the course curriculum and provide a regular source of performers.

CIP Partners

National Archives Records Administration
Franklin D. Roosevelt Library
www.archives.gov
Contact: Director Cynthia Koch

Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute (FERI)
www.feri.org
Contact: Director Christopher Breiseth
David Woolner
FERI - 4079 Albany Post Road, Hyde Park, NY 12538
845-229-5321

Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill
www.ervk.org
Contact: Director (vacant)
845-229-0742
Elayne Seaman, President of the Board

Eleanor Roosevelt Val-Kill Cottage Preservation Project
(Save America's Treasures)
Contact: Claudine Bacher
212-832-0832

Roosevelt-Vanderbilt Historical Association
www.roosevelt-vanderbilt.org
Bookstore operators

External Stakeholders:

Hudson River National Heritage Area
Greenway Conservancy
Contact: Carmella Mantello and Barbara Kendall
518-473-3835
<http://www.hudsongreenway.state.ny.us/conserv/conserv.htm>

Dutchess County Tourism
Contact: Karen Woods
<http://www.dutchesstourism.com>

Heritage Area Tourism Development
Contact: Karen Heroy
845-473-5199
www.hudsonvalleyheritagearea.com

Town of Hyde Park
Contact: Pompey Delafield - Town of Hyde Park - 845-229-5111

Frederick W. Vanderbilt Garden Association
www.marist.edu/fwvga

Beatrix Farrand Garden Association (BFGA)

Hyde Park Chamber of Commerce
Contact: Kathy Tallman

Marist College (Hudson River Institute)
Contact: Tom Wermuth
Contact: Chris Pryslopski - 845-575-3052

Scenic Hudson
Contact: Ned Sullivan

Open Space Institute
Contact: Joe Martens

Hudson River Heritage
Contact: Alan Newman

Wilderstein Preservation
Contact: Gregory Sokaris
<http://www.wilderstein.org>

Montgomery Place/Historic Hudson Valley
Contact: Waddell Stillman

Morris House (Locust Grove)
Contact: Ray Armeter

Mills Estate (Staatsburg) - State Parks
Contact: Melodye Moore

Congressional Representatives

Representative John Sweeney

Representative Maurice Hinchey

Senator Hillary Clinton

Senator Charles Schumer